

800.4.01.2 On Instructions  
of My Government  
P-Salinger, Pierre

## THE NATION

### Insecure Council

In the shrouded pyramid of ascending levels of governmental secrecy, the National Security Council stands at the apex. Yet when it meets and turns out the lights for a briefing, an outsider can walk right in. So, at least, claims former Presidential Press Secretary Pierre Salinger, who reveals that such a bizarre incident in his first novel, *On Instructions of My Government*, was based on an actual happening in 1961.

As Salinger tells it, Seattle Television Executive Elroy McCaw (who died in 1969) arrived in Washington to attend a Pentagon meeting of a volunteer citizens' advisory group of which he was a member. The meeting was canceled because the Berlin crisis was hot and the top military chiefs were attending an NSC meeting at the White House. Unaware of this, McCaw called Air Force General Curtis LeMay's office and was directed by a confused secretary to the meeting at the White House. According to Salinger, Brigadier General Chester ("Ted") Clifton, President Kennedy's military aide, escorted McCaw to a darkened room where slides of Soviet troop concentrations were being shown. When the lights were turned on, McCaw was astonished to find the President there—and the generals were even more shocked to see McCaw. To ensure security, they considered recalling him to active Air Force duty, but finally accepted his pledge of total secrecy.